DARK HORSE MAVERICK™

4 of 9

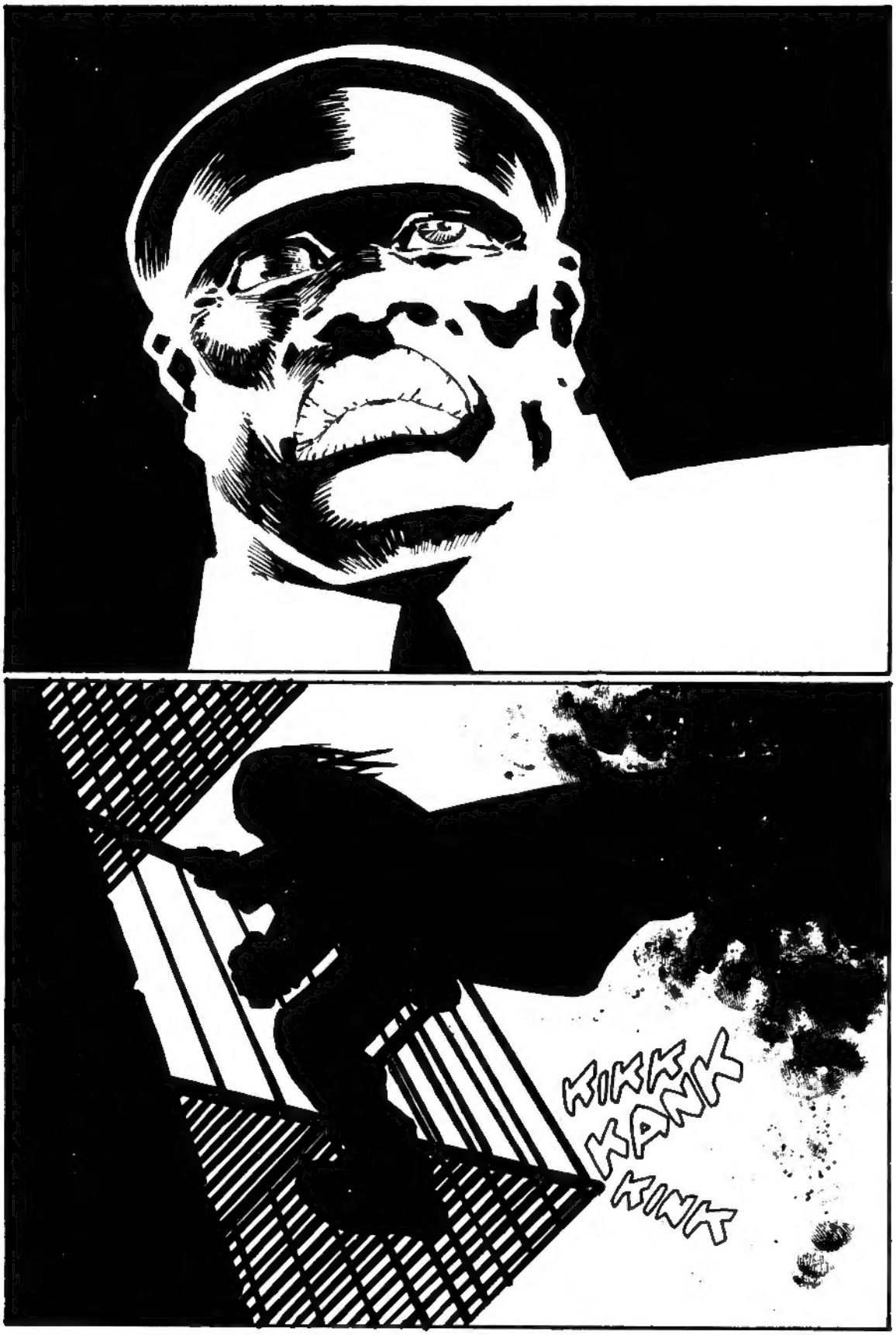
frank MILLER

HELL and BACK

A SIN CITY® love story

frank **MILLER** *story & art* lynn **VARLEY** *cover colors*

diana **SCHUTZ** *editor* cary **GRAZZINI** *designer* mike **RICHARDSON** *publisher*


KIKK
KANK
KINK

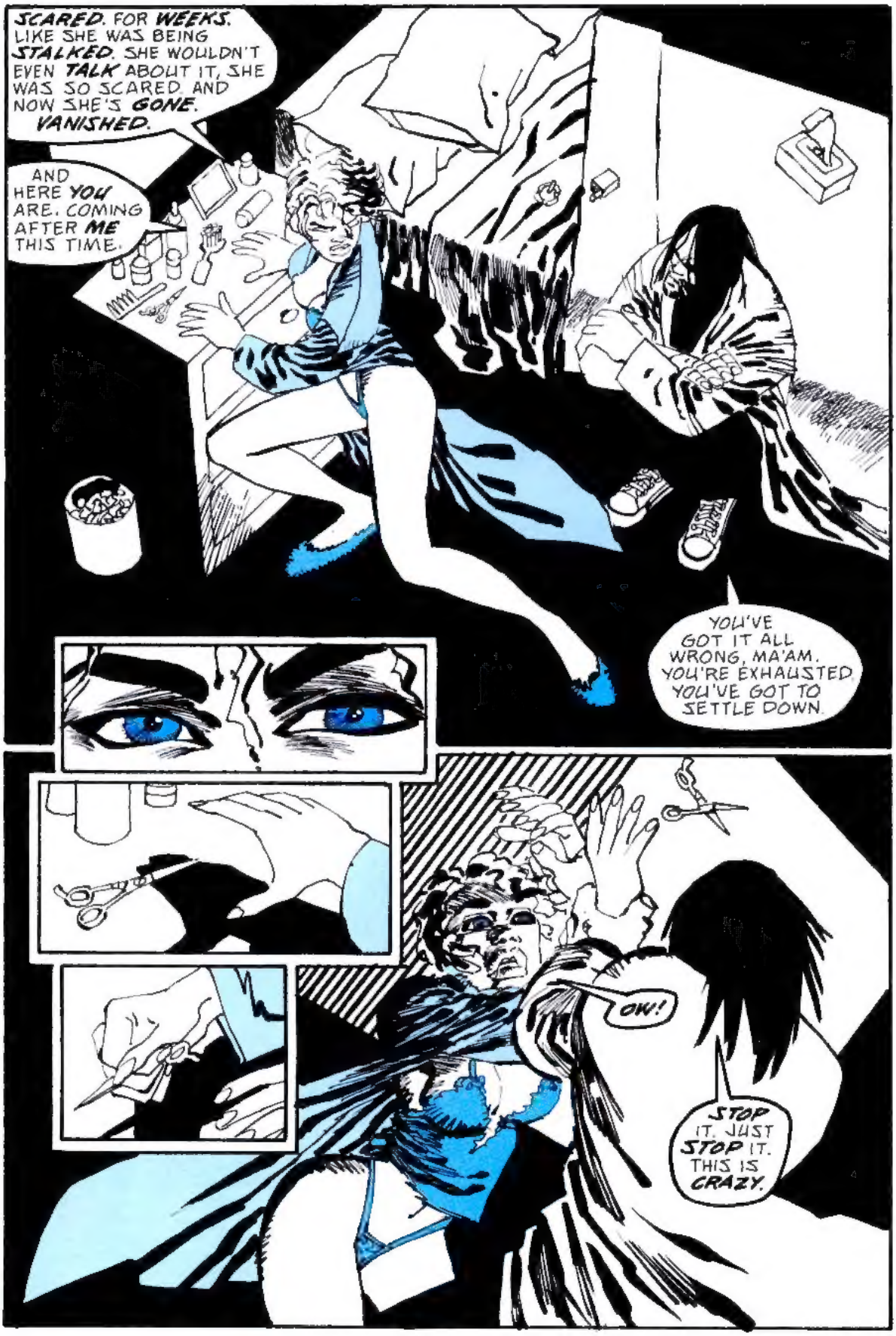
SKIK
TOK
TOK

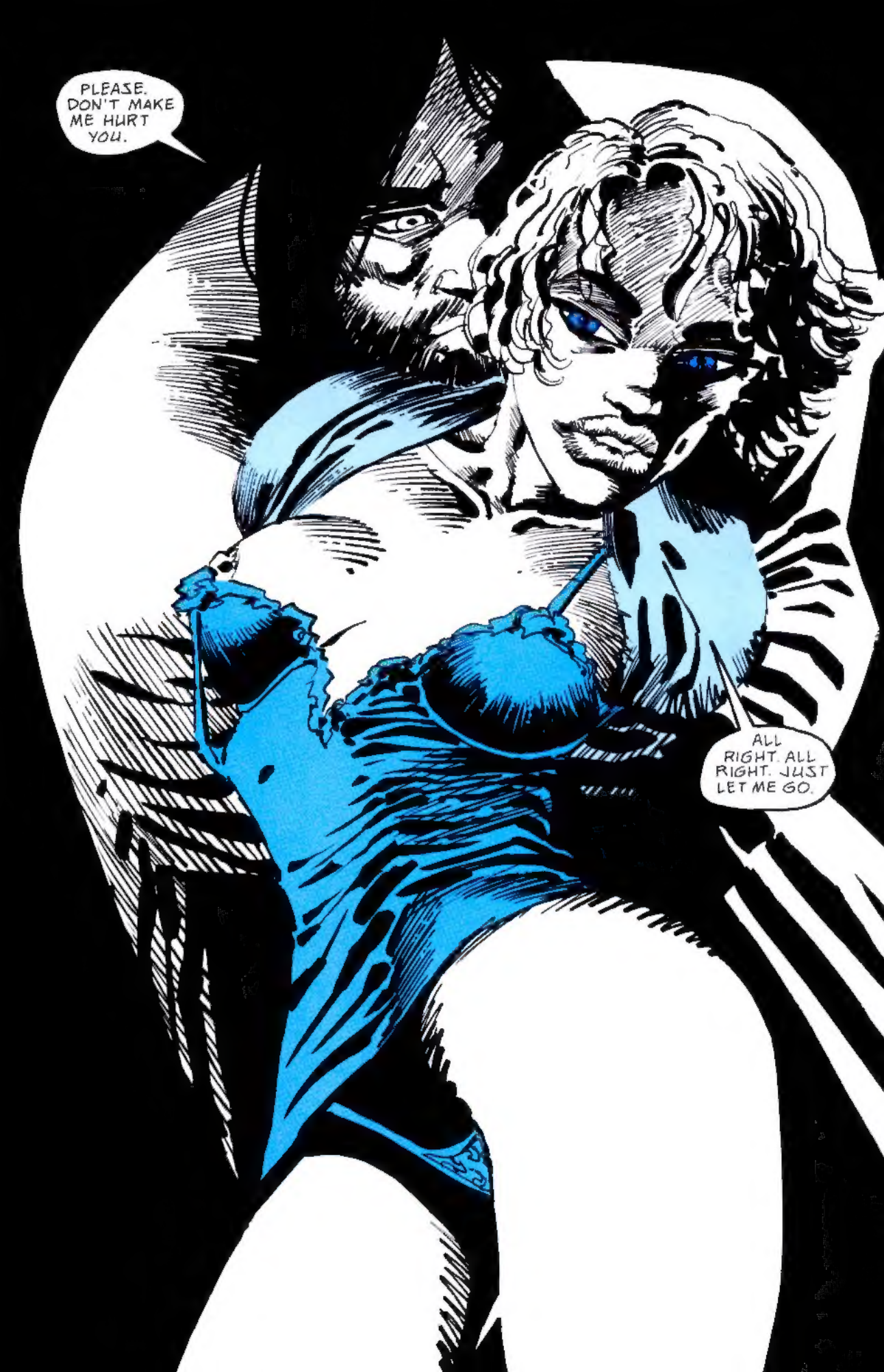
TOK
TOK
CHINK
CHIK
CHAK

TOK
TOK

TOK
TOK
WHAT DO YOU WANT, YOU BASTARD?
AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ESTHER?
YOU'VE GOT ME WRONG, MA'AM. I'M HERE TO HELP.

WHY THE HELL SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?
BECAUSE I'M TELLING THE TRUTH. BECAUSE I'VE GOT NO REASON TO LIE.
HERE. LET ME HELP YOU UP. TAKE MY HAND.
PLEASE. TAKE MY HAND.
HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY, THEN.
STAY AWAY FROM ME, YOU BASTARD. YOU SON OF A BITCH. IT WAS YOU. IT WAS YOU ESTHER WAS SCARED OF.


SCARED. FOR WEEKS. LIKE SHE WAS BEING STALKED. SHE WOULDN'T EVEN TALK ABOUT IT, SHE WAS SO SCARED. AND NOW SHE'S GONE. VANISHED.
AND HERE YOU ARE. COMING AFTER ME THIS TIME.
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG, MA'AM. YOU'RE EXHAUSTED. YOU'VE GOT TO SETTLE DOWN.
OW!
STOP IT. JUST STOP IT. THIS IS CRAZY.


PLEASE. DON'T MAKE ME HURT YOU.
ALL RIGHT. ALL RIGHT. JUST LET ME GO.

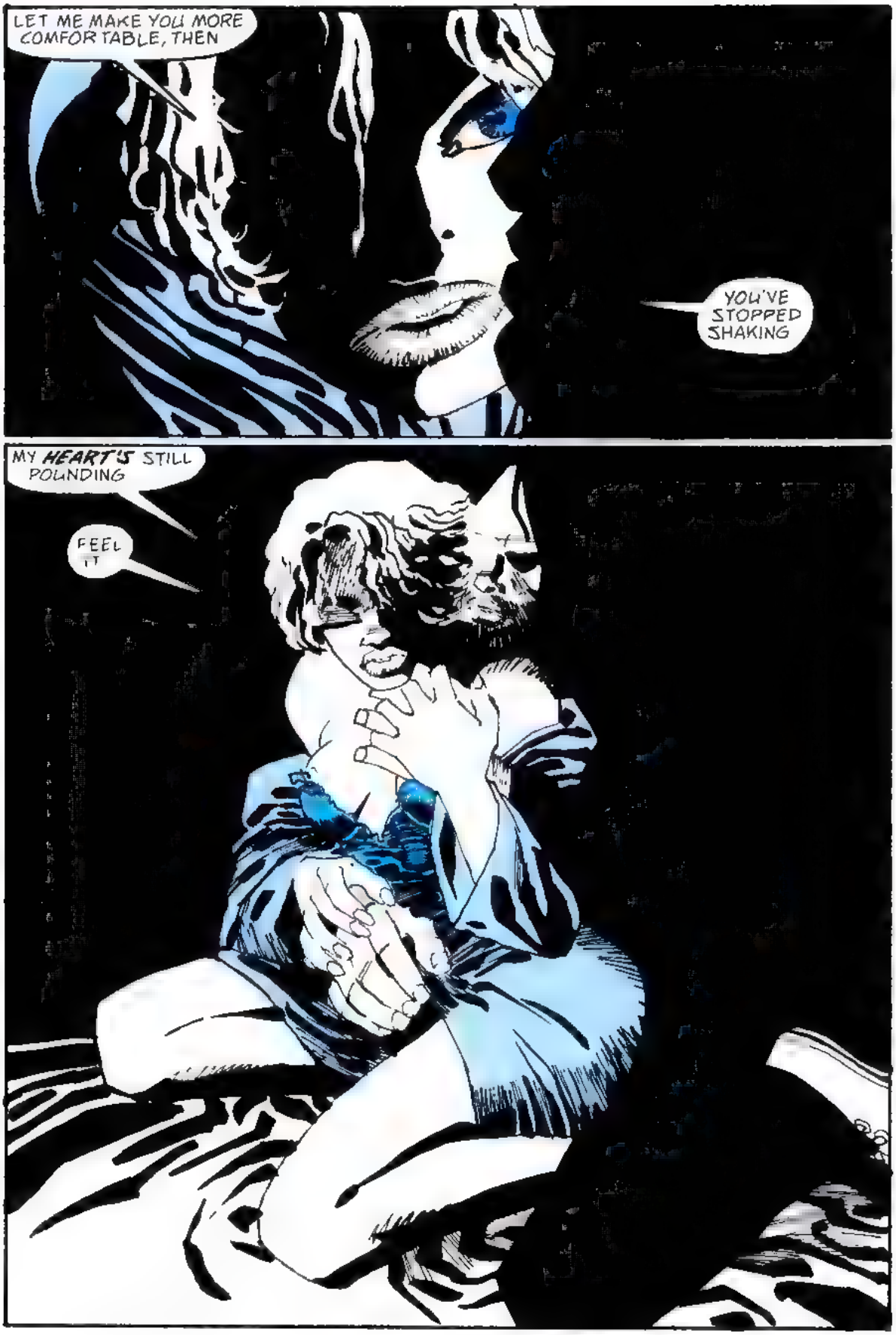
I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M NOT THINKING STRAIGHT. I'VE BEEN FRANTIC. I HAVEN'T SLEPT IN DAYS.
SLOW DOWN TAKE YOUR TIME TELL ME WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON I WANT TO HELP.
SHE'S DEAD, ISN'T SHE? ESTHER'S DEAD, ISN T SHE?
I DON'T KNOW
I WAS WITH HER WHEN SHE WAS KIDNAPPED BUT I DON'T KNOW MUCH AND I WANT TO HELP
KIDNAPPED. OH, GOD I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG BUT SHE WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT IT SHE LOOKED AWFUL. SHE DIDN T EAT.

ARE YOU HER ROOMMATE, MA'AM?
DELIA. MY NAME'S DELIA. AND, YEAH, ESTHER AND ME, WE SPLIT THE RENT
TWO WANNABE ACTRESSES, BOTH BROKE AS ALL HELL
WHAT'S YOUR STORY? AND WILL IT RUIN YOUR LIFE IF I SMOKE?
SNAP
"FRIEND," HUH? ESTHER'S BEEN HOLDING OUT ON ME AND I CAN SEE WHY
SMOKE AWAY
MY NAME'S WALLACE. I'M JUST A GUY A CONCERNED FRIEND

ACTUALLY, WE'D JUST MET THAT NIGHT THE NIGHT SHE WAS--
--HOLD ON. HOLD ON
FREEZING. ALL OF A SUDDEN I'M FREEZING.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
YOU'RE IN SHOCK MILD SHOCK WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU WARM
HERE YOU GO THIS'LL HELP
BE CAREFUL WITH THAT CIGARETTE
NOT WARM ENOUGH HOLD ME HOLD ME CLOSE.

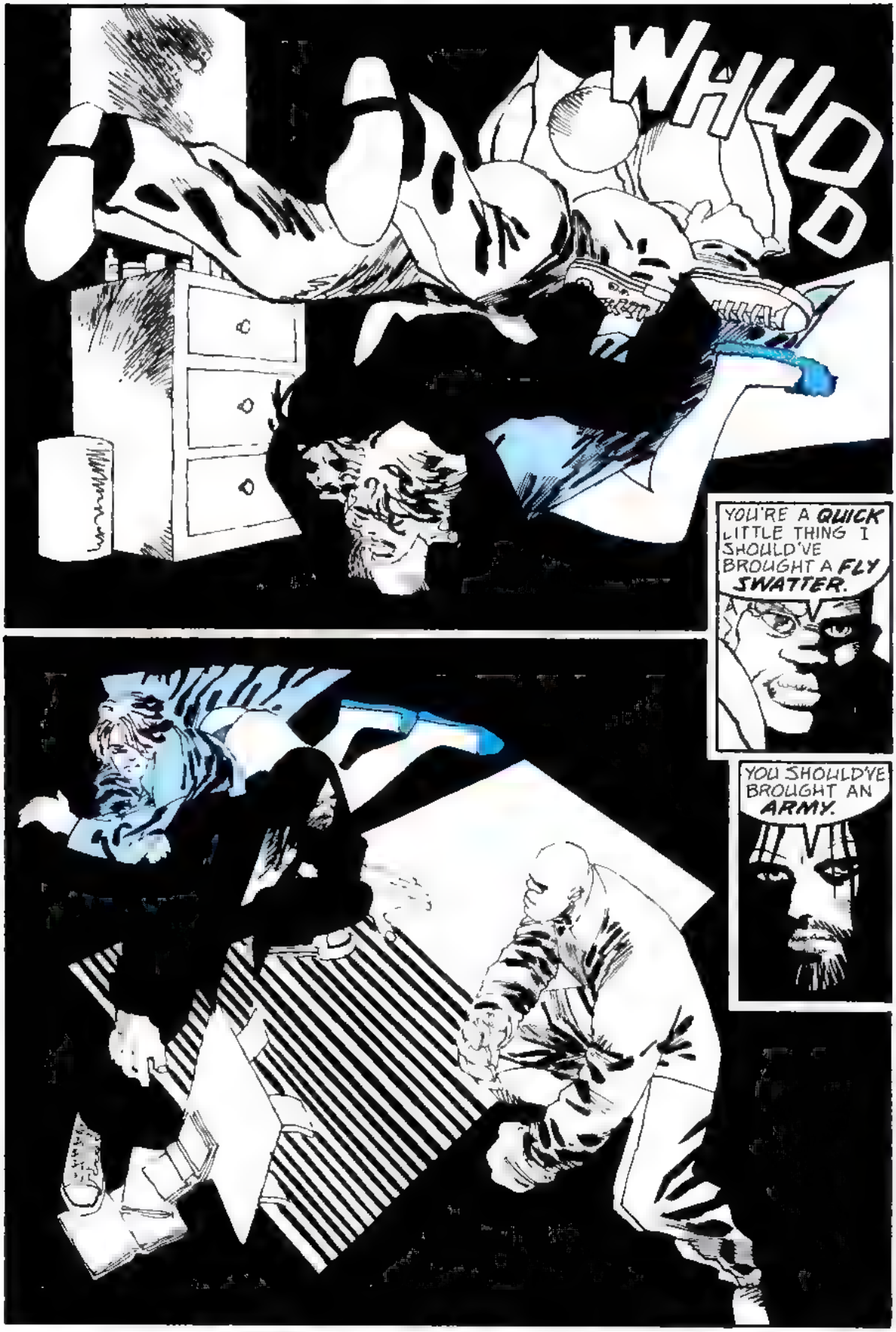
DON'T WORRY THIS LL PASS YOU'LL BE OKAY.
STILL FREEZING. CAN'T STOP SHAKING. HOLD ME CLOSER
CLOSER
CLOSER.
KRUNCH

YOU'RE NOT JUST BEING A GOOD GUY. YOU LIKE ESTHER.
DID YOU KISS HER?
YES
WAS IT NICE?
YES
AM I MAKING YOU UNCOMFORTABLE?
VERY


LET ME MAKE YOU MORE COMFORTABLE, THEN
YOU'VE STOPPED SHAKING
MY HEART'S STILL POUNDING
FEEL IT

NOW WHO'S SHAKING?
I AM MA'AM, I BARELY KNOW YOU
SHUT UP
CRASH

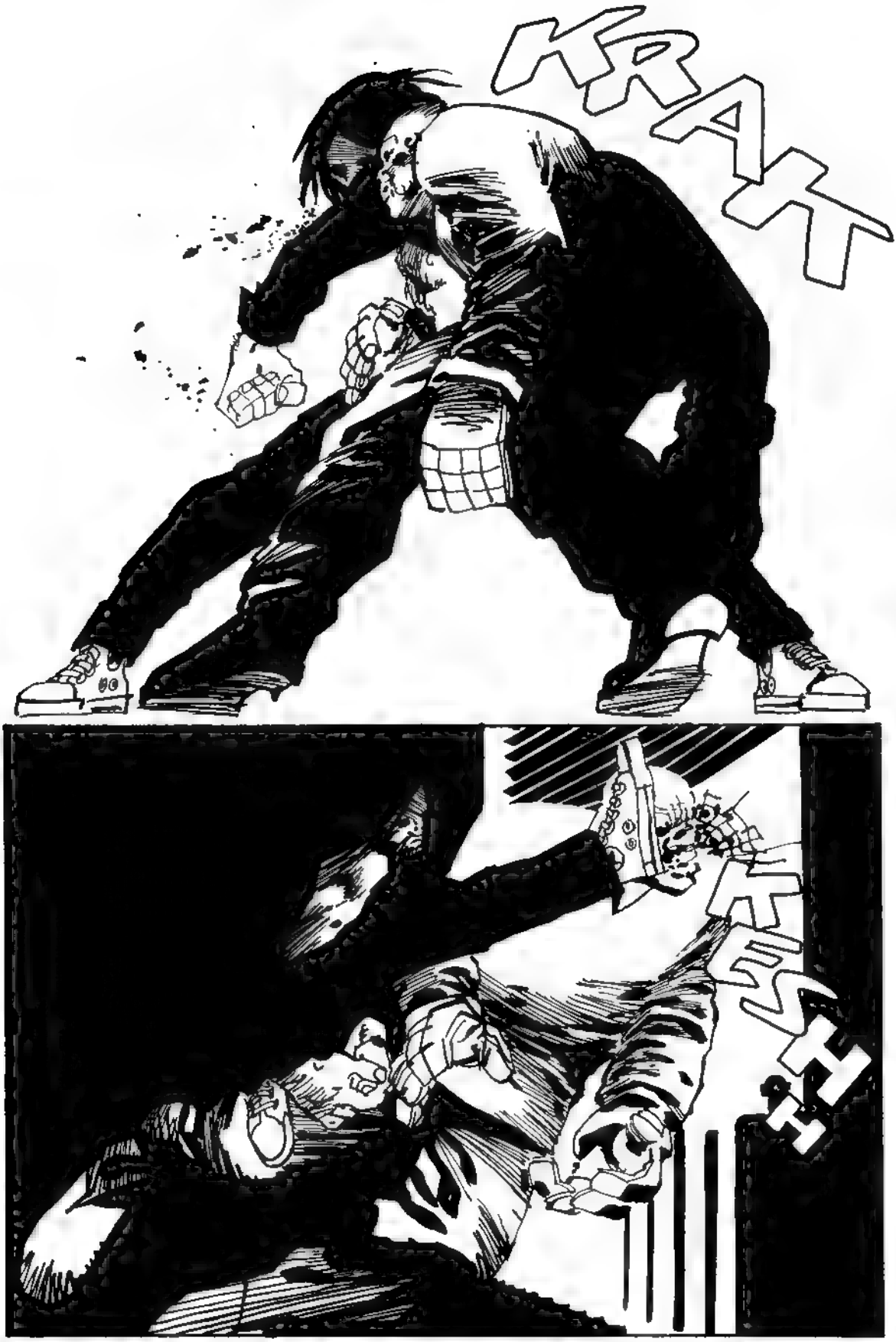
YOUNG LADY, YOU ARE COMING WITH ME
AND YOU, SIR, ARE SIMPLY GOING TO DIE


WHUD
YOU'RE A QUICK LITTLE THING I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT A FLY SWATTER.
YOU SHOULD'VE BROUGHT AN ARMY.

KAK
KRUNCH
YOUR NOSE IS BROKEN YOUR JAW'S NEXT
IT'S UP TO YOU

PEASANT I'LL BREAK YOU IN HALF
SPUTT
GRR

HOOFF
HEFF
KRAK


KRAK
SMASH

HERGG
HUNFF
DON'T.

AARR

CONTINUED

My vote for best short story this year: Kyle Baker's "Letitia Lerner, Superman's Babysitter!" It's a delicious little romp of a job, sweet and funny as could be, and, as per usual for Baker, beautifully drawn.

You haven't seen it?

Ask somebody from DC why.

Then ask Kyle.

Joe Hollon
Wilmington, OH

I must begin by saying how much I liked the cover. The *Hell and Back* logo is very nice and really stands out from the logo designs of the previous *Sin City* comics. I also really like the new Dark Horse Maverick logo and think it fits well up in the corner of this book. Lynn Varley is the only person who should be allowed to color Miller's art, so I am pleased that she is doing the covers, and at the same time I'm glad the interior will, as always, be black-and-white. Sin City is definitely a black-and-white place, and Miller is the master of black-and-white comics. It constantly amazes me how much he does with just the two colors and how much he creates with implied line and negative space (check out Wallace on page 16). The panel layouts are great. I especially like how they flowed together on pages 6, 7, and 8.

As always, the key component to a *Sin City* story is the characters. So far we have a struggling artist, an ex-war-hero protagonist, and a beautiful, suicidal, struggling actress/love interest who is being hunted down by two characters—and many unanswered questions. Why was she going to jump? Who are those guys in the ambulance? In *Sin City*, finding out the answers is always a wild ride, and I can't even imagine what Mr. Miller must have planned over a nine-issue series.

Well, what's planned is black and white and blue, and . . . wait and see, pal. This one's full of surprises.

Speaking of surprises, wasn't it a kick in the head that "Letitia Lerner" got suppressed in the U.S. comics market, its entire press run destroyed, not because of post-Columbine-massacre hysteria, but because DC all of a sudden grew "editorial standards"?

"Editorial standards."

Sure.

Alan Sinder
Los Angeles, CA

Frank has this vibe. When I read *Sin City: Hell and Back* #1, it brings to mind the hard-boiled tales of Elvis Cole and Joe Pike written by Robert Crais (and there is no higher praise in my book). I see both as happening in my fair city of Los Angeles See, in my humble opinion Basin City is a fantasy version of my town, as Los Angeles is mostly based in the L.A. Basin. The Basin City Buccaneers were the "visiting" Raiders, right down to their pirate motif. And no other major "big town" has a Redondo Beach Boulevard one can speed along Not that I know firsthand.

When I got to meet Frank face to face—I complimented his ability to capture a specific make of car with what I call a gesture. Be it a Tucker, the Caddy in *Sin City: Family Values*, or this book's big-finned convertible with all fours off the road like a wild stallion in a full-tilt race

I'm glad we have new players to learn about. Somehow I don't trust the Colonel's intentions. And I want to squash the henchmen like bugs. I want more. I want it now. Damn. I can't think of any weird perversion that involves watching someone's suicide—I guess it doesn't float my boat. I want Wallace to get Esther, and I don't want her to be a victim.

I guess I've got to hang around then.

What's really spooky is how Dark Horse Marketing Commandant Michael Martens can identify every last damn car I draw. As if him having the best music collection around weren't enough. Someday, somehow, I'll draw a car that'll stump him.

Paul Dale Roberts
Silhouet9@aol.com

Frank Miller's *Hell and Back* was mega-terrific! I was delighted to see Frank's magic touch on his drawings. I hope Frank never runs out of black ink! I would hate to miss out on any of this eye candy!

This African-American woman dominated the whole story with her electrifying presence. Doctor Fredric was surprised to learn she was suicidal, that a woman who has a strong body and good shape may be weak in the mind. I definitely want to learn more about her as this series continues. She has the power of observation and an analytical mind, as she was able to tell her newfound friend about his war medal. A war medal with a story behind it—what a

way to strike up a conversation. She has an alluring presence when she makes her appearance, and any man may become smitten by her ravishing beauty. I will be curious to see how this story progresses.

Beautifully written and beautifully drawn!

Jeff Dyer
Dubuque, IA

I trust you enough not to be let down by *Hell and Back* #1. No, don't worry. This isn't a negative review, but I can foresee how some readers might turn thumbs down on this latest foray into *Sin City*.

Chapter one starts off slowly, methodically. I mean, we spend over half the issue with Esther contemplating and, ultimately, consummating her leap from the cliff. Action junkies might think this is boring or pointless or lazy. Me? I know better. One of the aspects I've come to love best about *Sin City* is the way you take your own sweet time, Frank. *The Big Fat Kill* took five issues to climax. It took until at least midway through *That Yellow Bastard* (still my favorite) that we actually met Mr. Y. Bastard himself.

I'm thrilled that you'll be exploring and probing the scene with nine issues of *Hell and Back*. I know that issue #1 is just the opening chapter and that you'll undoubtedly have many surprises coming up. Even though *Hell and Back* is billed as a "romance," I'm sure it'll feature all the things your *Sin* fans love.

Wallace seems to be an interesting departure from the likes of Marv and Dwight, falling more into the heroic mold set by Hartigan. As for Esther, who knows? If you've taught me anything, Frank, it's never to predict the paths your female characters will take. Goldie, Ava, Nancy, Miho, and the rest are archetypes while still remaining totally original creations. Esther is still a mystery, although I suspect she'll fall more or less on the side of the angels.

I always enjoy seeing incidental characters make repeat performances in each of your *Sin City* stories. By the way, is there an approximate time frame in which all these stories are unfolding? Is it a year? A month? More or less? Speaking of background characters, Peggy and Otto seem to have a history together. Will you ever be giving these supporting characters a leading role? And is it too early to ask about your next *Sin City* project? I, for one, would love to see Hartigan in his prime

I cherish your work, Frank. Thanks for your commitment to making comics all they can be. I hope you'll stick with *Sin City* for as close to forever as you can!

Jamie Creer
Brisbane, Australia

It's been a while since I've journeyed into the dark depths of *Sin City*. *Hell and Back* is off to a promising start. It's only the first issue, and there are so many questions to ask. Why is Esther trying to commit suicide? Who was watching her? Why did Wallace win the Congressional Medal of Honor? And will Frank ever show us the painting that guarantees a "boner" of an erection?!

As usual, the issue is filled with film noir-ish elements: the out-of-work hero who puts pride before money (and, coincidentally, a kick boxer), the mysterious damsel in distress; and a shady, hidden enemy ready to strike without mercy. Another writer might take these elements and churn out the usual crime fodder, but you seem to create something a little different, a little individual, and yet all too familiar.

The letters page of a Miller book is always a must-read as well. I'm saddened that all the letters critiquing *300* focused on one sentence instead of the story as a whole. Personally, I find it's like looking at the Mona Lisa and having the guy next to you complain about the price of a Coke at the art gallery canteen. Some people just don't get it.

To pick a very small nit, it was "stiffy," not "boner." I wouldn't want to be vulgar.

I wouldn't, for instance, even think of writing or drawing a comic in which Green Lantern turned into a mass murderer. And I wouldn't ever portray a couple of backwater crackers getting their kicks by gutting a fish and using it for sex.

I've got editorial standards.

J.C. Vaughn
vjeff@diamondcomics.com

Very cool: a new type of character for *Sin City*, and a very interesting one at that. I can't wait to see where this one goes! I was going to quit after the first issue and just pick up the hardcover. Now I can't. Bastard.

Come on. Be nice. No name-calling. We've got editorial standards here.

Shorty Foster
shortyf@dtn.ntl.com

Just read the first issue of the new *Sin City* story, and—oh, my god—yet again the marvelous Mr. Miller totally blew me away. It's nice to see some new characters in the comic book, but it is also fun to spot the regular characters making background cameos. Peggy and her current drinks dispenser, Darryl, were a nice touch.

Also read the letters column and I would just like to say that not everybody takes you that seriously. I just thought it was funny that some people read so much into your stuff.

Scott Huver
TheHuve@aol.com

Last week, the worst happened. A sudden, unexpected, unavoidable job loss struck literally overnight, and I spent the last several days doing all sorts of mental belt-tightening, figuring on how to ride out that last paycheck for as long as possible, if necessary.

One indulgence had to go: my $20-to-$30-a-week comic-book habit would be put on hold until I was gainfully employed again. No income, no Pow! Blam! or Splat! I summoned my resolve and planned to hold firm. Besides, if the jones did strike me, I've got a closet full of thousands of the damn things to get me through, right?

Then, today, as I was driving around L.A., my own town without pity, a random thought blew through my head like a bullet: "Hey, wasn't the first issue of the new *Sin City* supposed to come out today?"

The next thing you know, I was pulling into Comics Ink in Culver City. "Just one won't hurt." You know the rest.

Damn you, Frank Miller, for making me weak!

And thank you . . . it was worth it. Whatever, as they say, gets you through the night. *Sin City* gets me through mine. See you next month.

Paul Pope
New York, NY

Frank's stuff is always great because he's one of the few creators who has a strong sense of the Romantic and who can create material with real heroes. Critics say he's wooden and repetitive, that his characters lack emotional depth, etc. In a way, those are valid criticisms. You heard the same things levelled at Ayn Rand, the closest contemporary writer dealing with the same type of themes. I don't always *like* what Frank does, but I *get* it, if you know what I mean. He's one of the few creators who can completely sweep me into a story and make me forget it's a comic I'm looking at/reading, and not actual life I'm experiencing. Dave McKean can do that; so can Harold Gray, Roy Crane, Otomo . . . So far the new story hasn't grabbed me, but the art is great. Frank's style is more and more peculiar and idiosyncratic, and that's good. He's learned his manga lessons well, and it makes *Sin City* easy to read.

Hey, thanks! You swing a mean brush yourself, and I enjoy your work immensely.

Ben Varkentine
Seattle, WA

You're setting us up, Frank.

To those of us who have read it, the ghosts of *A Dame To Kill For* hang over this couple like smoke in Kadie's.

A man and woman, both with a mysterious past that holds intimations of violence (the Colonel; winning the Congressional Medal of Honor all by yourself). Wallace is an artist who paints pictures of sexy women. Though Dwight was not an artist when we first met him, he was taking photographs of sexy women.

Let's talk about page 14, a visual echo (deliberate, I'm assuming) of page 5 of *A Dame To Kill For #2.*

Two exquisite women, diving against the moon. Both look like a promise of heaven, but the soul of one was a shape from hell.

So I look closely at this new woman and compare her with the first. Both have the right side of their face obscured by shadow. This suggests to me secrets.

Ava's hands are above her head. Her eyes are open as she stands, without clothes, on her toes, preparing to dive. She is in control, she knows she is being watched, and Dwight sees exactly what she wants him to see. Esther's hands are outstretched, almost as though on a cross. "You put a sheet on her." I hope that wasn't foreshadowing. Her eyes are closed as she leaps, fully clothed, into the sea, leaving one shoe behind. She is not in control, she doesn't know she's being watched, and Wallace seeing her was just luck . . . Good? Bad? Who knows?

Page 24, a lesson in visual storytelling: Time passes. A man waits for a woman to finish getting dressed. A comedy standby is flipped into a different level by the context: a woman who just tried to kill herself is still a woman, after all! And though she is a devastating one, her nudity is unselfconscious, contrasting her again with Ava, who was always aware of her sexuality.

Now, I'm certainly not always right—maybe you just like drawing scantily clad or unclad women against the moon. And who am I to say you nay? But I don't believe you'd set things up to fall into predictable *Sin City* plot lines without intending to twist them . . . and then twist them again.

You're setting us up, Frank.

The question is . . . why? What expectations are you trying to set up in our minds?

NEXT ISSUE: Wallace is nobody's fool. And he's got editorial standards aplenty.

Nice job, Kyle. I loved every panel of it.

— FM

Erratum: Apologies to Robert Gershinson, whose surname was misspelled in issue #2's letters column. Sorry, Mr. G.—I'm still workin' on those editorial standards.

— Diana

GALLERY

gil **KANE**

GALLERY

brian **BOLLAND**

FM

DIRECT SALES $2.95 U.S. $4.50 CAN

00411

7 61568 98403 3